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ABSTRACT

Incorporating an emerging view in which education is viewed from an integrated pedagogical-androgogical approach, this paper examines the theories and issues surrounding the incorporation of study skills into the aims and objectives of the education system and the school curriculum. The paper includes information from materials which deal with adolescent learning as well as higher education, and examines practical resources and instructional approaches. Following an introduction, the paper's four sections discuss the current status of study skills instruction in the schools; study skills program implementation issues; current practice of study skills instruction in the schools; and the study skills curriculum in secondary schools. Forty-one references are included; an appendix presenting five study skills programs and containing the theory, description, and evaluation of each is attached. (RS)

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INTEGRATING STUDY SKILLS INTO THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Integrating Study Skills
Into the Secondary School Curriculum

Introduction

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Introduction

There has recently been increasing pressure for the present education system in Ontario to be redefined to include a much greater curriculum concentration on content. This pressure is the result of concerns that elementary and high school education become more relevant to the problems and issues which face students today and which they will face in the future (Radwanski,1988). One of the ways to address this issue is to encourage increased responsibility and independence in students by including study skills in the school curriculum.

In the literature study skills are defined in various ways. Commonly accepted is the definition that study skills are the skills used to acquire, organize, understand, remember and express any information which students must learn (Bragstad and Stumpf, 1982; Devine, 1981; Lock, 1981). Study skills are teachable to all levels and to all students (Devine, 1981). They are skills which are not unique to school learning, but are lifetime learning skills which, though generally acquired during a student's educational career, can be developed and used throughout one's life. The proficient use of study skills gives the student greater mastery in the learning process thereby increasing the student's independence in learning.

Over the past two decades, there has been an ongoing

philosophical debate as to whether education should be process-oriented or product-oriented. This discussion has been fuelled by the realization that increasing numbers of students are not completing their high school education and that many of those who do are not equipped to handle the requirements of higher education or the demands of the workplace. Educators and potential employers have both criticized the learning which occurs in school as being insufficient preparation for the responsibilities which students face at present and will face in the future (Selmes, 1987).

This controversy has been seen as the focus of the dilemma which educators must face in order to improve the present education system. The views have ranged from the position that the two orientations are in complete conflict to the position that the two orientations are complementary and should be integrated (Brewer, 1985; Radwanski, 1988; Selmes, 1987). However, there is a potential gap in this line of thinking (Boud, 1981; Kahn, 1974).

Inadequate student preparation does not stem exclusively from a lack of concentration on accumulating knowledge, or the increased attention to the student's learning experience. There are problems which students face which are rooted in the inferior level of study and learning skills which the students have attained during their years in school. Whether students are learning specific information or affective values, their proficiency in study or learning skills will greatly affect their academic success (Kahn, 1974; Devine,1981). These skills span

all curriculum areas and are relevant to all student learning.

Up until recently, the study skills issue has rarely entered into the ongoing discussion on education and schools. The controversy has centred around the two diverging product-process views. In the last few years, however, educators have become more interested in the contribution which good study and learning skills make to student academic success. There have been indications that the study (learning) skills issue is being incorporated into the product-process debate (Radwanski, 1988). Consequently, what has emerged is the intention to include study skills in the school curriculum.

This new direction represents a development of great educational significance. Knowles (cited in Boud, 1981) suggests "...a fundamental restructuring of our way of thinking about the purpose and nature of education" (p.8). Recent deliberation has yielded an intention to redefine the educational aims and objectives of the educational system in Ontario to include a primary emphasis on content. The learning skills issue is given a prominent role as one of the content areas which should be included in the school curriculum (Radwanski, 1988).

The significance of this new development must not be diminished in the light of the 'back to the basics' revival. A pandora's box of educational problems and questions are raised just by the acknowledgement that the education system incorporate the teaching of study and learning skills. Decisions must be made regarding the form which this type of instruction should take, exactly what should be the content of this type of program,

and who should teach the program.

Issues of educational philosophy, psychology and ethical considerations must be dealt with in order to design an effective program to teach study and learning skills (Butterweck, 1926; Potts, 1981). Success for this type of program will depend on the development of a clear rationale (Selmes, 1987) on which the innumerable decisions regarding the instructional program and ongoing evaluation will be based. This new direction should not be viewed as a "passing fad or cosmetic improvement in education" (Knowles, cited in Boud, 1981, p. 8;) but as an outgrowth from the sincere intention to improve the existing system and as an expression of our continually expanding knowledge of the learning process and the increased demands of this knowledge-intensive world.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the theories and issues surrounding the incorporation of study skills into the aims and objectives of the education system and thus, the school curriculum. The paper incorporates an emerging view in which education is no longer equated with children and adolescents, but rather is viewed from an integrated pedagogical-androgogical approach (Knowles, 1975). Thus, information is included from material which deals with adolescent learning as well as higher education. Practical resources and instructional approaches are examined. Implications are drawn for the successful implementation of an effective study skills program.

Current Status of Study Skills Instruction in the Schools

Confronting the Issue of an Unspecified Curriculum

Students learn study skills, whether they are taught in school or not. They are generally transmitted as part of an implicit, unspecified curriculum. These learning skills develop during the students' years in the classroom environment and are most often acquired during an ongoing process of trial and error (Devine, 1981; Lock, 1981). The result of this 'learn-by-experience' method may be the acquisition of effective study methods and strategies, but also may result in less than effective skills (Askov, et al., 1980). Once it is realized that this 'course material' is already being taught, although passively, in the schools, issues arise as to the value of this type of indirect instruction of study skills and ultimately, what role study skills instruction should play within the school curriculum.

Study skills are best learned "where most conscientiously taught, and where structures are set up to allow for their practice" (Potts, 1981, p. 111). The traditional assumption which persists amongst many educators is that students learn study skills while fulfilling their subject area requirements (Maxwell, 1979; Selmes, 1987). On the other hand, students "report difficulties with the process of studying" (Selmes, 1987, p. 4) and as well, deficiencies in this area have been found in

the majority of secondary school senior students (Christen and Murphy, 1985). Both students and teachers report dissatisfaction with the present non-intentional approach to study skills learning and instruction (Lock, 1981).

Study skills are critical to success in school and, as well, are valuable in non-academic settings (Devine, 1981). A proficient level of study (learning) skill knowledge and use has far reaching effects on the individual. These benefits encompass both cognitive and affective aspects of the student's lifetime learning abilities.

Students of today are faced with an ever-expanding base of information and more demanding intellectual requirements than students of the past. Development of adept reasoning, decision-making and problem-solving strategies are critical to a student's future success in higher education and in the workplace. The ability to use higher-level cognitive skills such as the ability to make sound judgements and the ability to be innovative and creative gives the student greater adaptability and flexibility at a time when future success may depend on the individual's ability to respond to a constantly changing environment. The question arises as to how the education system can, itself, adapt to this new requirement to produce students who are sufficiently prepared for the future.

Redefining Educational Aims to Include Study Skills

Knowles (1975) has stated that "it is no longer realistic to

define the purpose of education as transmitting what is known...thus the main purpose of education must now be to develop the skills of inquiry" (p. 15). The view that information and learning skills are essential to a new definition of educational aims and objectives is found in much of the present literature (Boud, 1981; Brewer, 1985; Chibnall, 1987; Knowles, 1981; Selmes, 1987; Tabberer, 1987). Even in 1900, Hinsdale stated that "early 20th century pioneers were advocating a change in the aims of education from acquisition of knowledge to...acquisition of habits and skills" (cited in Butterweck, 1926, p. 1).

Although belief in the value of content-based learning seems to preclude the belief in the importance of skill-based learning, this is not necessarily valid (Knowles, 1981). Study and learning skills enhance the learning process. This applies to all types of learning, and especially in the cognitive and affective domains. Inclusion of one concentration does not necessarily prohibit the other area of concentration.

Belief in the importance of including study (learning) skill instruction in the aims and objectives of education hinges on the belief that academic ability and intelligence are capable of being improved (Devine, 1981). For many educators, this issue of educational philosophy and educational psychology is one which they have not been required to consider or make. Although there is evidence that cognitive abilities can be modified as a result of cognitive intervention (Feuerstein, 1980) and with training (Devine, 1981), there is hesitation in making the philosophical adjustment and thus, in accepting the consequences which follow

from such an intellectual jump.

There is no easy way to teach students how to learn (Marland, cited in Selmes, 1987). However, since schools are in the information and learning 'business', this does require that the topic of student learning be addressed at all levels of educational planning and design. Once the issue of integrating study (learning) skill instruction into the educational curriculum is considered, decisions go beyond whether to teach study skills, but rather centre around what form this instruction should take.

Unfortunately, there are very few present models of study skills programs at the secondary school level, and the programs which do exist are mostly descriptions of present study skill provisions (Tabberer, 1987). Therefore, any change which is undertaken to integrate study skills into the school curriculum primarily must have its roots in sound educational practice and program design, and must stem from the assessment of the study and learning skill needs of the students.

Determining the Objectives for an Effective Study Skills Program

The development of any new educational program requires that objectives be set. The available literature on study skills instruction, outlines two distinct approaches regarding the objectives of a study skills program. Gibbs and Northedge (cited in Main, 1985) clearly delineate programs which have a 'learning to learn' approach from those which concentrate mainly on

training in specific techniques. Since the purpose of teaching study skills is to improve students' academic performance and to enhance their learning ability, both of these approaches must be considered in their capacity to fulfill these goals.

Traditionally, formal study skills programs have been based on training in specific techniques. Study methods are generally taught in terms of the task which they fulfill and are presented in the form of advice. Students need instruction in new methods and without opportunity for practice it is unlikely that they will adopt new techniques (Selmes, 1987). However, Robyak and Patton (1977) state that "prior research [has not supported the] notion that the content of a study skills course accounts for the effectiveness of the course", and that "a student's increased use of study skills may be more closely related to improved academic performance than the student's knowledge of study skills" (p. 200). Knowles (1975) is critical of technique-centred programs, suggesting that their effectiveness is limited, stating that they "leave students totally dependent on the content and structure of the formal course of study, without increasing their ability to learn independently or "proactively" (p. 102). Specific technique training has also been criticized for encouraging dependence on further instruction from experts to bring about further change (Gibbs and Northedge, cited in Main, 1985). The issue, thus, becomes one of dealing with the challenge of how to ensure that students will use the new methods and strategies once they have been presented.

The 'learning to learn' approach to study skills instruction encompasses the notion that the effectiveness of a study skills program depends not only on the student learning 'how to' but also their understanding of the 'why and when' (Cavanaugh and Borkowski, cited in Duell, 1986) of each study method and approach (Gibbs, 1981; Selmes, 1987). Furthermore, knowledge about how learning occurs and how they as individuals learn best enhances student learning of new strategies and increases the likelihood that the new strategy will be used (Paris, Newman and McVey, cited in Duell, 1986).

Flavell (1979) believes that knowledge about learning, referred to as metacognitive ability, has a powerful effect on the development of student learning. Baker and Brown (cited in Snowman, 1986) have identified two types of metacognition. The first is "knowledge about cognition" and the second is "regulation of cognition" (p. 206). When a student has an understanding of the learning process and is able to apply that knowledge to modify his or her approach to learning then he or she is better able to achieve a learning goal.

To summarize, the objectives of a study skills program must incorporate three main features which includes study methods, study strategies, and a metacognitive component (Brown, cited in Snowman, 1986; Devine, 1981; Selmes, 1987; Tabberer, 1987).

Study Skills Program Implementation Issues

Dealing with Study Skills Problems

The source of student learning problems can be difficult to isolate. Problems in the learning process can stem from many different causes and can manifest in a myriad of ways. For many students the obstacle lies within the scope of study skill inadequacies. This topic can be examined by considering where student learning needs lie and what kind of programs are suited to meet these needs.

The source of weakness in study skills may be rooted in any one or all of the three previously identified areas: study methods; study strategies; or knowledge about learning. Furthermore, these problems can manifest within a wide range of skill areas. In much of the literature these skills are classified into three categories. The first category is that of personal development skills such as goal clarification or time management; the second, process skills such as note-taking techniques or memory skills; the third, expression skills such as writing or test-taking skills (Bragstad & Stumpf, 1982; Greff, 1986; Hamblin, 1981; Shepherd, 1982; Sherman, 1984).

There are varying degrees of study skill or learning skill deficient students. Maxwell (1979) distinguishes two types of programs which address different levels of student learning problems. Supportive programs are generally termed

'developmental' and are aimed at improving existing study skills by correcting weaknesses and fully developing student strengths. Remedial programs are those which aim to overcome academic deficiencies and so are for students whose skill levels are significantly below those of the 'typical' student and have the need for intensive skill building.

The literature reveals that study skill problems can be dealt with in any one of three ways. Instruction can occur in small groups, large groups, or on an individualized basis. Since opportunities for individualized instruction are very limited in the secondary schools, this type of instruction is not examined.

The benefits of small group sessions as opposed to large group classes are stressed by many authors. Generally, smaller groups are thought to be more conducive to informal discussion and provide an opportunity for greater student involvement. Gibbs (1981), Main (cited in Selmes, 1987) and Collier (cited in Brewer, 1985) have developed programs which are based on the belief in the value of small group sessions. Gibbs' approach emphasizes group work and structured discussion of established study methods and learning strategies. Main uses a counselling approach which has its foundation in a therapeutic framework. Collier's program is syndicate-based and employs the use of intensive debate between the students. (See Appendix A for descriptions of these programs.)

There are two dilemmas which must be faced in any group learning situation. Bloom points out that it is unlikely that a student will reveal a learning difficulty in a group. As well,

it may be demeaning for the students to have their problems corrected in a group, especially a small group. These obstacles stem from the intimacy of small group sessions and the lack of confidentiality in the large group situation.

Although there is a common myth that below-average achievers learn best in small classes, this has not been verified by research (Maxwell, 1979). Rather it is suggested that slow-learners learn better in large classes taught by a well-organized instructor (Bernstein, cited in Maxwell, 1979). This infers that the large class option is more suited to students who are in need of remedial study skills instruction. On the other hand, studies show that students of above-average ability benefit most from small discussion classes (Maxwell). Thus, small group discussion may be more appropriate for students who have a fairly proficient level of study skill knowledge and use, and so mainly require supportive study skills instruction.

Tabberer (1987) states that study problems frequently arise from motivational problems but that improved study skills will not overcome motivational problems. When deciding what form study skills instruction should an issue which arises is whether attendance should be mandatory or voluntary. The effectiveness of a study skills program on individual improvement is affected by the student's willingness to attend the course. Thus student motivation is an important aspect to consider when designing a study skills program (Tabberer, 1987).

In any learning situation the motivational level of the student is a significant factor in academic achievement (Devine,

1981). It has been suggested that student motivation is a more significant factor than intelligence (Borisseau, 1972, cited in Woodlands, 1978) and ability (Mead, 1934, cited in Woodlands, 1978). Thus, the success of any school program will be somewhat determined by the amount of interest and perseverance which the attending students possess. This strongly applies to study skills programs, during which the students are required to involve themselves in an active as well as reflective process (Main, 1985). Therefore, whether attendance is required or whether it is optional must be considered.

There are some very positive aspects of holding mandatory study skills classes. Mandatory school programs have the advantage of removing the stigma associated with remedial courses resulting in less student hesitation and less resistance to attend (Maxwell, 1979). They also ensure that all students are given the opportunity to learn about and improve their study skills. One problem which follows from required attendance is that some students who have not elected to take the course have not necessarily exhibited interest in improving their learning skills. These students may gain little benefit from the material and when very resistant, may even distract other students.

Voluntary study skills programs have the luxury of being attended by students who, just by their presence, have shown some commitment to change their study habits. However, there are many students who are hesitant to attend. In the students' eyes, study skill programs may be equated with academic problems. This stigma only reinforces the hesitancy which students may have to

voluntarily attend a study skills program.

Maxwell (1979) has found that students who most need study skill assistance are the least likely to seek it out. She points out that most academically weak students are not likely to seek help voluntarily and so avoid the services planned to help them. She also indicates that students with stronger skills are often motivated to improve whereas those who are less skill proficient are more hesitant to use support services.

If study skills programs are voluntary then educators cannot depend on the students' initiative to get help. The students who need to develop better study skills must be identified early either by teachers or parents and must be encouraged to seek out the support which they need. Therefore, recognition of and diagnosis of the skill difficulties of students must be assured.

Instructional Approaches to Improve Student Learning Skills

An appropriate teaching approach and the teaching strategies used to implement a study skills program must be determined by its ability to satisfy the three necessary components of an effective study skills program: study methods, study strategies and a metacognitive component, as delineated above.

There are two instructional approaches which can be implemented in the presentation of a study skills program. The first, the direct approach, is a structured approach in which the teacher acts as an instructor or director (Tabberer, 1987). The content is determined by the instructor who provides direct

instruction in specific study techniques. The second, a guided approach, is more student-centred, the teacher acting as a facilitator, resource person (Knowles, 1975), or mentor (Tabberer). (See Appendix A for examples of direct and guided programs.)

The main difficulty arising from the use of a direct approach is that the issues which surround the transferability of the new skills and the student's likelihood to put new study methods into practice are not addressed, both of which have been demonstrated to be critical to improved academic achievement via study skills.

Students tend to conform to a teacher's conventions. Although the methods which are learned may enable the students to do better in that particular classroom situation or subject area (Heinrichs and Lehnert, 1986), the transfer of the new skills to other purposes may not result (Butterweck, 1926; Selmes, 1987). Main (1985) suggests that the instructor act as an information source, helping the students to achieve targets which they themselves have set. Potts (1981) believes that his role as an instructor renders him responsible for contributing "valuable materials and ideas" (p. 111). These attitudes are indicative of belief in the value of student developing a sense of responsibility for their learning. By allowing for greater active participation and self-expression, student independence is also encouraged (Tabberer, 1987).

Since this approach has the potential to give too little direction to the student, Goldschmid (1981) recommends that the

program design "strive[s] for delicate balance between student initiative and responsibility on the one hand, and the provision of sufficient institutional structure and support on the other" (p. 118).

Each of the direct and guided approaches has been deemed appropriate for students with different learning needs. Thus, in order to select a teaching approach one must first address the questions as to who are the students who are attending the study skills program and which approach would benefit them the most.

Any discussion of instructional approaches must also consider the issue of teaching style. If there is a poor fit between the individual student's learning style and the methodology presented by the teacher the student is unlikely to incorporate the new skill into his or her learning approach. This is relevant, regardless of whether a direct or a guided approach is utilized, although style may make a greater contribution to the course when using the guided program approach.

One of the determining factors when selecting the appropriate teaching strategy should be student learning style. Since some students learn better independently and some need or may prefer a more highly structured learning situation (Congreve, 1965). Although it is difficult to balance the learning needs, skill competence and motivational levels (Tabberer, 1987) of many students, the approach is best chosen that accommodates the students' individual learning style as much as possible.

Study Skills Instructors: Classroom Teachers or Study Skills Specialists?

The question of who should teach study skills has been examined by Maxwell (1979). She delineates the two views as to who should teach study skills. One supports classroom teachers; the other suggests study skill specialists. She clearly states:

> Successful programs have dedicated, skilled, dynamic instructors who can give students the emotional support they need as they work through the program, can explain how the concepts they are learning relate to their other course interests, and are efficient managers. Not all teachers have these qualities."
>
> (Maxwell, 1979, p.383)

Whoever the instructors of study skills programs are, they must be firm believers in the potential for change in the student's learning ability (Feuerstein, 1980).

Teachers are often considered the logical choice to act as study skill instructors. However, teachers who have an extensive knowledge of their subject do not necessarily have an "awareness of the skills required to learn and to understand it" (Chibnall, 1987). Although teachers identify study skills as a source of difficulty for their students, and believe that good study skills are valuable to students, most are hesitant to devote class time to study skills instruction (Chibnall, 1987).

Unless teachers have a good knowledge of study skills and how they can apply to the student's tasks in their subject area

they "either do not teach them or else do a poor job" (Kamm, White, and Morrison, 1977). There is evidence to suggest that many teachers have not mastered these skills (Askov, Kamm and Klumb, 1977) themselves and as well, do not have much experience in this area (Gibbs, 1981).

One cannot teach before one learns. This holds for study skills instruction as well any other subject material. The training which most teachers receive does not include training in study methods and "has certainly not distinguished between the methods appropriate to different activities" (Chibnall, 1987).

The teaching of study skills within the classroom is a teaching task which requires an approach that teachers must first master themselves before they pass it on to their students. Not only must teachers use these skills in their own approach to learning, but as well adjust their classroom teaching to include a 'study skills approach' (Tonjes & Zintz, 1981). This will manifest itself in such areas as the organization of the material presented and the evaluation of the student's work. One can see that this becomes a complex issue since student study problems can result from teaching problems (Chibnall, 1987).

If study skills are to be taught in the content classroom then it is up to the teachers to fulfill the content requirements of their subject, also to teach the appropriate study skills which apply to their subject area. At a time when there is increased pressure for students to achieve a higher level of mastery in the subject areas, is it reasonable to expect teachers to be able to accomplish both of these tasks well?

This leads us to consider the role of the study skills specialist, someone whose expertise and experience lies in this particular area. An instructor who is knowledgeable in the study skills field and is trained to give learning skills assistance would be best suited to act as a study skills instructor. Maxwell (1979) is the only author who delves into this option and her concept of 'Learning-skills Specialists' mostly relates to the higher education setting. Thus, there is little information available and virtually none found which relates directly to the high school setting.

In considering the use of a specialist in the role of the study skills instructor the issue of the course being held other than in the content classroom must be considered. There is opposition to the idea of having study skills taught outside of the content classroom (further discussion to follow), the main criticism being the lack of continuity between what is presented in the study skills program and what is expected by the teacher (Tabberer, 1987). There is the potential for there to arise some confusion for the students. This can be remedied by the curriculum being developed by the specialist in cooperation with the teachers (Selmes, 1987). This would ensure the inclusion of the teacher's individual concerns while being designed by a person who is trained in this particular field.

Course Content of a Study Skills Program

There are two conflicting views put forth in the literature

regarding the nature of the course content of a study skills program. The first puts emphasis on the specific methods which compose the course. Conversely, the second stresses that the exact course content is not of critical importance. Rather, emphasis is put on the depth of learning (Anderson & Armbruster, cited in Dupuis & Askov, 1982) which takes place and the overall experience of the student in the session. One can see that the belief in the primacy of either of these two views will have a powerful effect on the content of the study skills course.

Before discussing the influence of these views on the effectiveness of a study skills course, it is appropriate to mention some underlying principles which dominate content selection across the entire spectrum of opinion. One is that the skills taught be based on actual student tasks (Daines, 1982; Main, 1985; Selmes, 1987; Tabberer, 1987); the other, that they should be based on the student's present level of knowledge and use of study skills (Selmes, 1987). These are both well-accepted principles of learning which make strong contributions to the effectiveness of any educational endeavour.

Much of the literature suggests that the issue is not one which focuses on the exact methods which should constitute the course content. Rather, the dispute centres on whether the exact study methods taught are essential to the effectiveness of a study skills program. Dupuis and Askov (1982) state:

> "While research has tried to establish which study techniques, such as outlining, notetaking, and underlining, seem to produce the best learning, it is

now recognized that the particular technique applied is not as important as the "depth of processing" required (Anderson and Armbruster, 1982)." (p. 228)

Some authors go so far as to suggest that it is less than helpful to the student to put the concentration on the specific methods.

In the majority of study skills programs the content is employed in a 'prescriptive' (Potts, 1981), product-oriented manner (Lewis, 1978). The students are told which method to use and where to use it. This 'best-method' approach (Selmes, 1987) introduces course material as inflexible advice. This encourages dependence on the instructor and the development of rigid study habits (Selmes). It is a linear approach which masks subskills and skills of different kinds and levels (Tabberer, 1987).

This approach is also evident in the many books on study skills improvement. Whether written as self-help books, as student information resources, or as teacher resources, most of these books share this 'best advice', over-simplified approach (Boud, 1981; Gibbs, 1981; Selmes, 1987). Gibbs (1981) refers to these books as 'inadequate' (p. 60-65) and Selmes (1987) identifies them as 'idiosyncratic' and 'contradictory' (p. 7-8). Many teachers use these books as information sources although most of the materials are directed to the college student and are not necessarily appropriate to the high school students' tasks and time requirements.

Many students yearn for a simple solution to their difficulties and these books do little more than mislead the student into believing that long term change is easy to

accomplish. Not only must the busy student be motivated enough to put himself or herself through the step-by-step program, but must have the time to do so. Gibbs (1981) suggests that resources be specially designed to heighten the students' sense of purpose in their learning. This must not be an easy goal to achieve using the print media, as witnessed by the lack of this type of resource presently available.

Use of the 'best method' approach denies the value of affective benefits as a desired outcome of the learning process. Many authors have indicated that there is a significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement (Brookover; Gergen; Irwin; Martinson; Purkey; cited in Woodlands & Wong, 1978; Devine, 1981). Main (1985) goes as far as to suggest that "confidence probably relates as much to success as does effective study method" (p.95). Study skills programs offer an opportunity to build a student's sense of confidence in his or her learning ability. A curriculum which deals directly with student study problems and the anxiety related to student difficulties is more likely to result in improved student performance than one which deals solely with study techniques (Dendato and Diener, 1986).

Special opportunities for positive support and feedback do not necessarily occur spontaneously, but should be an element of any study skills program. As mentioned earlier, it is of critical importance that students increase their understanding of how they, as individuals, learn best. Greater confidence in their own skills will encourage them to seek further improvement

and new ways to express their knowledge. These are outcomes of a student's education which will last throughout his or her life.

Current Practice in
Study Skills Instruction

Traditional Approaches to Study Skill Improvement

Many teachers do teach students how to study. Up until recently study skill instruction has primarily been in the form of remedial or developmental reading classes, library skills programs, instructional packages, and as teacher-specified curriculum. Remedial and developmental reading classes are conducted as supplementary instruction for those whose reading competency is not adequate. Library skills programs are taught to help students gain familiarity with how to use library facilities, and for the purpose of improving student research skills. Instructional packages most often take the form of research skill booklets or study skills tip sheets. Teacher-specified instruction is conducted in the content classroom and generally consists of task-related study skills which are specified by the teacher and which the teacher requires the students to use in their subject area class.

Some problems become apparent due to the nature of these many and diverse programs. During a student's educational career, he or she comes into contact with a variety of the programs described above, most of which convey information about study skills in the form of tips. Very few students feel that general problems have been dealt with in the study skills

instruction which they have received (Selmes, 1987). Although some benefit will ensue, the lack of continuity and consistency in the study skills instruction which students presently receive, as well as the lack of skill practice and reinforcement do not ensure long term benefit for the student.

Study Skills in the Content Classroom

In the content classroom, study skills instruction is integrated into the subject material of the course curriculum. The techniques presented are mainly task-oriented and are generally teacher-specified. Instruction in study methods takes place on an as-needed basis in order to aid the students in fulfilling course assignments and in preparing properly for tests and examinations. This approach is mainly centred around a belief in the direct teaching approach (Selmes, 1987) and the functionality of the subject area framework.

There are numerous positive aspects of using a content area approach in the teaching of study skills. These include the benefits of the skills being taught in context, the methods being presented as they are needed and practiced on content materials, and the immediate opportunity for application of the skills. Although much of the literature indicates strong support for this practical type of study skills program (Daines, 1982; Dupuis and Askov, 1982; Herber, 1965; Rubin, 1983), there are very few descriptions of high school programs which can be found in the current literature. (See Appendix A for description of Herber's

and Rubin's programs.)

Two of the requirements for a comprehensive study skills program are that the curriculum is well planned, and that it is based on the present level of study skill proficiency of the students. However, there are many difficulties in satisfying these components in the content classroom.

Improvement of student learning problems, such as study skill deficiencies, requires that proper assessment, treatment and follow-up occur. Allocation of class time must include time for assessment of weaknesses, demonstration of methods, explanations of strategies, practice and feedback.

Devine (1981) remarks that "most of the instruction [in study skills] is unorganized, unsystematic, and unfocused; sometimes it is casual and perfunctory" (p. 1). As well, students have remarked that the teachers who ask them to apply study techniques do not provide instruction in the skills and do not evaluate the student's efforts in this area (Dupuis and Askov, 1982). These comments are an indication that the intention to include study skills in the content classroom is not sufficient to ensure delivery of a good instructional program.

The primary concentration in the content classroom is the teaching and learning of subject matter. Teachers are under pressure to complete course content in order to prepare students for examinations. As a result, study skills instruction is generally not a high priority and may be viewed as a distraction from the goal which is completion of the subject area curriculum. Tonjes and Zintz (1981) point out that "study skills are not

something added to the curriculum and...[an]already crowded schedule, but rather thay are pathways leading to successful content mastery" (p.364).

This brings to view the issue of study skills being left to the teacher's discretion. The teacher's beliefs about the usefulness of study skills instruction in developing a student's academic ability will shape the form of the classroom instruction or whether instruction of this type is included (Devine, 1981). Thus, the program becomes dependent on the individual teacher's belief, interest and willingness to devote class time to study skills instruction.

Though many teachers would like to integrate study skills components into the subject material, sufficient time is not usually available for research and planning of the curriculum. (Tonjes & Zintz, 1981). As well, due to the restraints of examination deadlines, the amount of class time which can be devoted to study skills segments is limited. This task just adds more to an already tight schedule and puts pressure on teachers whose time is often pushed to the limit (Tonjes & Zintz).

When faced with the task of integrating study skills into their classes, teachers are often at a loss as to where to begin. Chibnall reports that the majority of teachers would prefer that study skills be presented in a general course and then followed-up in subject lessons. This hesitancy on the teacher's part may result from the lack of practical and human resources in the study skills field which are available to teachers. Effective program design and implementation is difficult to acomplish

without appropriate resource materials and support personnel.

Even if these problems which relate to teacher responsibility (Selmes, 1987), time limitations and lack of sufficient resources are overcome, there still remain problems which stem from the large size of the classroom grouping (Maxwell, 1979) and its inflexible structure. Opportunities for individual attention are limited and difficulties arise from the numerous different levels of study skill difficulties which will manifest in a random group of students (Maxwell). As well, there are enormous difficulties in maintaining consistency and continuity when instructional style and content will vary from teacher to teacher and year to year. All of these concerns must be addressed when considering whether the content classroom is the best environment for the teaching of study skills.

Building Study Skills in a Separate Skills Course

A separate study skills course consists of instruction which primarily concentrates on building students' study and learning skills. This is a type of general course which is held in the school as a special program. It offers opportunities for flexibility of instructional style and size of student group are that are not possible in the content classroom.

Content class groupings consist of students whose academic abilities vary as well as their proficiency in study skills. This makes it very difficult to address the wide range of weaknesses which surface in each class group. In a specialized

class, student groups can be arranged by other than entire class groupings in order that problem areas can be targeted and dealt with in a more direct fashion. Each course can then be planned to deal with specific student problems and can be attended by students whose weaknesses lie in that particular area.

In addition, there are more choices in instructional style possible in a specialized class. For example, small discussion sessions can be held which facilitate greater attention to the students' individual learning needs. One illustration of this type of program is a study skills course using small group discussions which has been developed by Gibbs (see Appendix A for description). Selmes (1987) and Devine (1981) also offer support by stressing the value of special study skills programs.

Questions have arisen as to the relevance of the instruction given in a separate program to the student's subject lessons when courses are not planned in collaboration with the subject teachers (Selmes, 1987). It is necessary that the methods and approaches being encouraged in the separate session be employed in the content classroom. Tabberer (1987) suggests that separate classes are useful, but that subjects are a crucial contributor to study skills development. This implies that in the content classroom, it is essential that students are given opportunities to apply the skills they have learned in the special study skills class. Students need support in their attempts at self-monitoring, and feedback from the teacher concerning their progress toward their goals.

Study problems can sometimes arise from teaching problems

(Chibnall, 1987). Maxwell (1979) noted that in every study skills exercise that she has run, issues arose which stemmed from difficulties in the classroom. Students need the opportunity to explore their study problems and to express their concerns regarding their schooling in a non-threatening atmosphere. This would not be possible in the content classroom with the subject area teacher. To ignore the importance of dealing with this issue directly is to limit the effectiveness of the program and the benefits to the student (Gibbs, 1981).

The solution to the question of whether to teach study skills in the content classroom or in a separate skills class is not simple. It is important that the students receive quality instruction, that they are taught versatile, practical methods, that they are able to use the new skills in their subject classes, and that they can apply them in new situations. In order to accomplish these major requirements, there seems to be the need for in-class and special class instruction. To incorporate both options as facilities for a study skills program demands a great deal of coordination, cooperation and careful planning. These are the requisites of every educational endeavour, and are likewise undeniably critical to the integration of study skills into the secondary school curriculum.

Study Skills Curriculum in the Secondary Schools

As is not the purpose of this paper to examine specific study techniques and their effectiveness, the research and views in this realm have not been covered. Rather, the issue of what should be the nature of the study skills curriculum is discussed, as well as the implications for the implementation of this new curriculum.

Nature of the Study Skills Curriculum

A new educational strategy must be based on a clear rationale and must have its foundation in principles of educational psychology (Selmes, 1987). It is also helpful to refer to models and to rely on the practical experience (Maxwell, 1979) of experienced specialists. Unfortunately, there are few well-defined models of secondary school study skills programs to which to refer (Tabberer, 1987) when developing a new program. Thus, educators must rely on principles of psychology, principles of learning and empirical knowledge.

In order to clearly define the study skills curriculum, objectives for the program must be established. Based on previous discussion, these objectives must have a multiple focus.

Following is a suggested guideline which incorporates three objectives:

1. Acquisition of Knowledge about Study Skills
    A. Study methods
    B. Study techniques
2. Development of Study Strategies
    A. Planning
    B. Organizing
    C. Problem-solving
3. Metacognitive Component
    A. Learning about the learning process
    B. Understanding one's own learning
    C. Regulation of one's own learning.

(adapted from Brown, cited in Snowman, 1986; Devine, 1981; Selmes, 1987; Tabberer, 1987)

It has been shown that there are many options available regarding instructional approaches and what should constitute the content of a study skills program. There are five factors which should serve to influence the decision-making process in these realms. Subject matter, learning activities, and teaching strategies should incorporate the following elements.:

1. Continuity and Consistency

    Sequential structure and cross-curriculum co-ordination.
2. Support for Transferability of Acquired Knowledge

Understanding the potential use of methods and strategies in new situations.

3. Variety of Study Approaches

   Encouragement and acceptance of individual study approaches.

4. Development of Self-confidence in the Student's Learning Ability

   Positive self-concept developed.

5. Foundation in Established Principles of Learning

   Factors which should be included:

   A. Active participation of students.
   B. Provision for individual differences.
   C. Facilitation of individual motivation and interest.
   D. Opportunity for practice.
   E. Tasks broken down into component parts.
   F. Principles of a subject area or a study approach.
   G. Meaningful materials and tasks.
   H. Criteria for successful performance.
   I. Feedback regarding progress.

   (adapted from Devine, 1981; Fraenckel, 1973; Selmes, 1987; Tabberer, 1987)

There is no universal solution to the question of how study skills should be taught. There is not one right way to teach study skills any more than there is one right way to accomplish

any task (Tabberer, 1987). A study skills program must be thoughtfully designed, implemented and evaluated by developing curriculum based on the students' learning needs, tasks to be accomplished and ability levels. The issues regarding how this can be achieved and who is best suited to undertake these tasks must be considered in order to effectively integrate study skills into the school curriculum.

Implications for the Implementation of Study Skills Curriculum

The acquisition of study habits and the awakening of an interest in learning is initially shaped in childhood and adolescence (Brewer, 1985). The major contribution to the development of an individual's learning ability and motivation for learning is made by the programs and methods used in the schools (Brewer). It is to the student's benefit to encourage the development of good study skills by incorporating study skills into the school curriculum as a comprehensive program which would start early in one's schooling. Thus, by the time students reach secondary school, their background in study skills is sufficiently strong to prepare them for the development of increasingly more complex strategies and to apply their study approach to the content areas.

The issue that educators are facing at this time is how to fit study skills instruction into the present school practices, which, up until now, have not incorporated study skills into the school curriculum in a methodical way. Integration of study

skills into the school curriculum must be undertaken as a gradual process (Selmes, 1987). It must evolve from clearly defined objectives into a concrete expression of the program's aims. This is a labour-intensive project which requires sufficient funding and human resource allocation (Neale, Bailey & Ross, 1981). There must be a strong commitment to change at the school and district levels (Neale, Bailey & Ross).

School improvement requires changes at all levels. Change is required at the level of aims and objectives, at the organizational level, and also is required of individuals (Neale, Bailey & Ross, 1981). The involvement and support of the teaching staff is critical to the successful implementation of a new curriculum program. It is essential that teachers become familiar with the aims of the study skills program, the resource materials which are available and the teaching methods which can be employed (Selmes, 1987). In order to fulfil this requirement, teacher education and in-service training sessions must include instruction in the teaching of study skills.

It is important not to underestimate the effect on the students of the incorporation of study skills into the school curriculum. Students will gain better study and learning skills and, as result, will take greater responsibility for their own learning. The purpose of the integration of study skills into the school curriculum is to increase students' ability to meet the requirements of higher education and the workplace. Success in this venture will be measured by the students' level of knowledge, mastery and independence in learning.

Appendix A

Program: Study Skills Program in a Special Class

Developed by: Graham Gibbs (1981)

Instructional Approach: Non-directive/Guided

Size of Group: 12-40 students

Theory: Gibbs' approach emphasizes group work and structured discussion of study methods and learning outlooks (Tabberer, 1987). Self-awareness in studying is developed through group discussions. Students examine, for themselves, the content and processes of learning. Improvement in study skills is based on the student's previous school experiences. Materials are used which are designed to heighten the student's sense of purpose in learning (Gibbs, 1981; Selmes, 1987).

Description: Students are divided into pairs and are given a common task. Discussion follows which focuses on the task. Two pairs of students then form a new group and again tackle the task. Discussion again follows. Finally, the whole group discusses their experience with the task (Selmes, 1987).

Evaluation: Although Gibbs' work has made an impact on many schools (Tabberer, 1987), the effectiveness of his approach has been questioned. Teachers in an NFER project trial of the use of Gibbs' materials report that "too much attention is given to ineffective procedures...it is time consuming...it is too cumbersome a method for drawing attention to effective methods of study" (Selmes, 1987, p. 11). As well, the teachers found it hard to non-directive and the students found it difficult to be self-analytical. However, many educators maintain that his approach is more likely to develop students' study skills than traditional approaches (Selmes, 1987).

Program: Study Skills Instruction: A Counselling Approach

Developed by: Alex Main (1985)

Instructional Approach: Non-directive/Guided

Size of Group: One Individual Student

Theory: Main's work is based on individualized, non-directive counselling (Selmes, 1987). It is a therapeutic approach which employs reflective techniques. Emphasis is put on the contribution of confidence to success. He believes in making change in study methods and approaches a safe activity for students (Main, 1985). Main stresses the importance of bridging the gap between 'knowing and doing' by raising students' awareness of the learning process and through active participation (Selmes). Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

Description: Through discussion, students explore difficulties encountered in their studying. Students then make their own decisions about alternative methods. The reflective techniques used are: listening and exploring; understanding and relating; focusing and assisting. The counsellor provides information on useful study skills which can be

used by the student to achieve their self-determined targets.

Evaluation: Opportunities for individualized counselling are limited in the schools. As a result, this approach may more likely be used for students who are extremely weak in their use of effective study techniques (Selmes, 1987). Main's approach is especially valuable in developing a student's sense of purpose and independence in his or her own learning (Selmes).

Program: Study Skills Course : A Syndicate Method

Developed by: Collier (1980), (cited in Brewer, 1985)

Instructional Approach: Non-directive

Size of Group: 4-8 students

Theory: Collier's 'Syndicate Method' incorporates small group discussion and intensive debate in order to develop higher-order learning skills.

Description: Each class is divided into syndicates of 4-8 students. Each syndicate acts cooperatively as a team in completing assignments. Much of the group work is done in the absense of the teacher. Intensive debate in the syndicates provides a central function of Collier's technique. His approach may constitute an entire course or a component of a program.

Evaluation: This type of course encourages students to become more independent in their learning. Difficulties may arise due to the lack of outside input to the group discussions. This approach requires that students have a fairly proficient basic level of study skill knowledge. Without this, students would be unable to participate valuable information or views to the discussions and debates.

Program: Direct Teaching in the English Content Classroom

Developed by: Harold L. Herber (cited in Tabberer, 1987)

Instructional Approach: Direct Teaching

Size of Group: Classroom Grouping

Theory: Herber's approach is based on the contribution of reading and thinking skills to the development of competence in English studies. It is based on the importance of structured learning and a student's ability to apply study methods to learning tasks. Study skills are developed as needed and are practiced on content materials.

Description: There are three phases to Herber's program. The first is the direct teaching of study skills in reading classes; the second, the direct teaching of study skills in English classes; the third, the functional teaching of specified study skills in content areas.

Evaluation: This program is designed to develop students' study skills throughout their entire educational careers. Herber's program employs a product-oriented approach. The teacher is primarily responsible for the students' learning of new

study skills. Students' understanding of the learning process is not stressed. Rather, this is a method-based program. Its effectiveness will depend on the students learning to apply the methods learned to new situations.

Program: Direct Teaching in the Science Content Classroom

Developed by: Dorothy Rubin (1983)

Instructional Approach: Direct Teaching

Size of Group: Class grouping

Theory: Rubin's approach is based on the value of developing reading and study skills in the science class. Skills of inquiry are seen as critical to the acquisition of new concepts. The interrelatedness of skills of scientific inquiry and reading comprehension is stressed. Students are encouraged to develop higher-order thinking skills.

Description: In the science content classroom students are encouraged to develop interpretive, critical and creative comprehension. Teachers play a significant role in this process. Their role is based on helping students in a scientific manner. As well, the teacher is viewed as a role model. A directed reading approach is employed to enhance the student's ability to read the sciences. Teachers stress the development of scientific vocabulary and the use of SQ3R as a textbook reading method.

Evaluation: Rubin's approach has its value in increasing students' conceptual understanding of science material. Its weakness lies in the realm of the development of problem-solving strategies. It also does not incorporate the benefits of the development of the students' metacognitive abilities.

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